

Test, Prototype, and Media Evaluation Vehicles

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Test Vehicles

Test vehicles can be:

- Current and/or past model year vehicles being operated and tested for parts durability.
- Experimental or preproduction (prototype) vehicles being operated and tested to determine the vehicles' marketability.
- A pilot vehicle being operated and tested for equipment or design problems.

To conduct temporary vehicle testing under the *California Health and Safety Code* §§43101-43104:

- The manufacturer must provide a Statement of Facts (REG 256) form which states:
 - The beginning and ending dates of the testing period.
 - That the vehicle will not be sold in California.
- Imported vehicles **must** have approval from all the following agencies, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times:
 - U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
 - California Air Resources Board (CARB).
 - U.S. Customs. A U.S. Customs, Declaration (HS-7) form is required.

These agencies usually authorize a specified number of vehicles to operate under a blanket authority.
- U.S. manufactured vehicles:
 - May be operated on California or nonresident manufacturer or distributor license plates if California has reciprocity with the nonresident state.
 - Must have registration for street use if the vehicle enters California on manufacturer or distributor license plates from a state that **does not** have reciprocity with California.
 - Must have CARB approval to operate in California, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times.
 - Must have certification or authorization from the U.S. manufacturer that the vehicle meets U.S. federal motor vehicle safety standards (FMVSS) and EPA standards. The manufacturer may issue a written certification, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times, or affix U.S. FMVSS and EPA labels on the vehicle.
 - May only be operated by the manufacturer, distributor, their employees, or a test driver under contract with the manufacturer or distributor.

Prototype Vehicles

Prototype vehicles are produced without documentation (manufacturer's statement of origin) because they are not intended to be registered or sold in California.

Prototype vehicles are released for evaluation purposes prior to actual production.

Prototype Vehicles, *continued*

To conduct prototype vehicle evaluations:

- The manufacturer or distributor must provide written certification, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times, that:
 - The vehicle meets U.S. FMVSS and EPA standards and has CARB approval.
 - Designates the individual or firm authorized to operate the vehicle.
 - Indicates the beginning and ending dates of the evaluation period.
- The vehicle:
 - May only be operated for evaluation or promotional use, not for personal use.
 - May only be operated on California manufacturer or distributor license plates for up to 90 days. Nonresident manufacturer or distributor license plates **cannot** be used in California.
 - Must have CARB approval to operate in California, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times.
 - Must be registered for street use if operated by a contracted commercial or noncommercial entity other than the manufacturer.
 - Must be registered in the manufacturer's name, if operated under a blanket authority.

Media Evaluation Vehicles

Media evaluation vehicles are used for evaluation or promotional purposes by national media entities, such as *Road and Track*, *Car & Driver Magazine*, or the *Los Angeles Times*.

To conduct media evaluations or use a vehicle for promotional purposes:

- The manufacturer or distributor must provide written certification, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times, that:
 - The vehicle meets U.S. FMVSS and EPA standards and has CARB approval.
 - Designates the individual or firm authorized to operate the vehicle.
 - Indicates the beginning and ending dates of the evaluation period.
- The vehicle:
 - May only be operated for evaluation or promotional use, not for personal use.
 - Must be equipped with a California emission system, as evidenced by a label under the hood.
 - May be operated on California manufacturer or distributor license plates for a period not to exceed 30 days. Manufacturer or distributor license plates may only be used on a vehicle equipped with a California emission system and registered for street use in California.
 - Must have CARB approval to operate in California, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times.
 - May be operated on California registration for up to 12 months and removed from the state no later than the ending date of the CARB authorization. If license plates and a registration card are issued, they must be surrendered to the department when the authorization ends.
 - Cannot be sold in California.

Procedures

To register test, prototype, and media evaluation vehicles, the manufacturer or distributor must submit the following to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) headquarters (applications **cannot** be processed in field offices):

- A completed Application for Title or Registration (REG 343) form showing the manufacturer or distributor as the registered owner and the cost information.
- A Verification of Vehicle (REG 31) form.
- An invoice in the name of the manufacturer or distributor designating the manufacturer or distributor as the owner.

NOTE: The invoice is used in lieu of a registration or ownership document. A California Certificate of Title **will not** be issued.

- A REG 256 certifying that the vehicle will:
 - Be** used for evaluation, promotional, or testing purposes only.
 - Not** be operated for personal use.
 - Not** be sold in California.
- A copy of the CARB authorization to operate in California (in lieu of a smog certification).
- Fees due by check or money order (cash will **not** be accepted). Manufacturers or distributors may calculate the fees due or use the DMV registration fee calculator at www.dmv.ca.gov/FeeCalculatorWeb/index.jsp.

All of the above documents and fees due **must be mailed** to:


<i>Regular Mail</i>	<i>Overnight Mail</i>
Special Processing Unit MS D238 Department of Motor Vehicles PO Box 932345 Sacramento, CA 94232-3450	Department of Motor Vehicles 2415 First Ave MS D238 Sacramento, CA 95818 Attn: Special Processing Unit

Background

Previously, test, prototype, and media evaluation vehicle information was not included in the *Vehicle Industry Registrations Procedures Manual*. This information will be included in a future revision.

References

California Health and Safety Code §§43101-43104



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